

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

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SUBJECT: (Optional)

Monthly Report -- London Bureau

FROM:

EXTENSION

NO

Chief, Operations Group

DATE

December 1988

STAT

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

1.

C/MOD

2.

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C/Computer Operations

12.

13.

14.

FED Secretary

15.

5 January 1989
FBIS-4401-89

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group
FROM : Chief, FBIS London Bureau
SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- London Bureau -- December 1988

I. GENERAL

1. On the BBC-union front, General Manager Whitehall announced on the 23d that "some progress" had been made at 22 December national-level talks on the automation issue and that another meeting has been scheduled for 5 January.
2. In another BBC development, it was announced on 7 December that former General Manager Monitoring David Witherow has been appointed Deputy Managing Director of the BBC World Service.
3. The dollar improved somewhat against the pound during the month in the wake of unfavorable UK trade figures, but ended the year at \$1.82 to the pound, still 12 cents above our budget computation figure of \$1.70.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. Total bureau wordage for 1988 was an all-time high, with the grand total of 37,902,000 reflecting an almost 3.2 million-word increase over 1987 and 8.73 million over 1984. The annual daily average file went into six figures for the first time in the bureau's history. Indicative of the increasingly prolific nature of London Bureau's coverage sources is an 8 December Belgrade TANJUG item boasting that the TANJUG editorial board for Serbia alone produced "over 1,000 more articles" in 1988 than in the preceding year.
2. Noting that the "extraordinary is becoming the ordinary" at London Bureau the acting Wire chief praised the bureau's handling of the Supreme Soviet session early in the month. PMU also received Wire praise for its rapid handling of an IZVESTIYA report on the status of Marshal Akhromeyev. On the 15th, PMU editor [] provided Headquarters with the first Soviet report on the appointment of Colonel General Mikhail Alekseyevich Moiseyev as chief of the USSR Armed Forces General Staff and first deputy defense minister in place of Akhromeyev. The report appeared in the Pressfax edition of KRASNAYA ZVEZDA.

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3. In preparation for BBC automation, the bureau is arranging for BBC modernization personnel to brief bureau staff on the intricacies of the new BBC system. The first speaker was BBC modernization assistant [redacted] STAT
4. BBC announced during the month the appointment of [redacted] as new head of the Russian team replacing [redacted] who has transferred to Bush House. STAT
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5. An article by bureau senior editor [redacted] on the usage and translation of Thai royal titles was published in a recent edition of NO UNCERTAIN TERMS. STAT

B. Coverage

1. London Bureau/BBC and Nicosia continued to coordinate closely throughout the month to ensure maximum coverage of Soviet regional radios in the wake of the Armenian earthquake and continued ethnic tension in the area. The bureau also coordinated closely with Jordan and Nicosia over coverage of the GCC Summit in Bahrain and with Abidjan over coverage of the 14-15 December French-African summit in Casablanca. BBC augmented regular Moroccan coverage with satellite-monitored Rabat TV for this latter event.
2. Several bureau coverage sources were disrupted by strikes during the month including Helsinki radio from 15 November to 21 December, Spanish radio and TV on 14 December and Sudanese media later in the month as part of a general strike in that country. BBC attempts to monitor Omdurman radio and TV were futile from 28-30 December, leading to speculation that Sudan had changed satellites, but both returned on the same satellite on 31 December when the strike action ended. SUNA was placed on special coverage at Caversham and, despite some strike-related interruptions, provided useful coverage of events.
3. The bureau and BBC were disappointed when a survey of the new Estonian service begun by Stockholm radio on 5 December showed the new service to carry mostly general international news with little unique reportage on the Baltic situation. The new service will continue to be spot-checked in the future.

C. Lateral Services

1. At the request of the Secretary of State's office, the bureau filed a number of items directly to Secretary Shultz at the UN from Stockholm radio and other sources on Yasir 'Arafat's 7 December statement.
2. Special services to the London Embassy included alerts and updates on the 21 December Pan Am air disaster and provision of a videotape of a 7 December BBC TV documentary on the 1938 Bukharin trial.

3. Services for other embassies included refiling items on SRV guest workers in East Europe to the embassy in Paris at the request of the Bangkok Embassy, refiling the text of the Hungarian defense minister's 12 December radio interview to the embassy in Budapest at the request of the defense attache; and answering the Vienna CSCE mission's request for reportage on the current SFRY government crisis.

D. Communications

Internet: The new Internet downtime reporting procedures were successfully implemented during the month when Madley duly gave the required 48-hours notice before taking down the Internet audio/video systems to repair a radiation leak at Madley.

E. Technical

1. During the month the engineering staff installed the full loopback capability for the Pressfax digital circuit and tested the circuit within the UK using the new Firebrand test set. The end-to-end test of the circuit with Reston began on 30 December and was successfully completed on 3 January.
2. Engineer [] has completed and tested the hardware for the new line selector for the [] circuit and has begun developing the software, which will be completed once we have a final decision on data format.
3. New orderwire equipment, including equipment which will allow us to use Internet for narrowband fax transmissions, has been installed in the Internet bays. This equipment will be operational once we have in hand the final documentation and wiring details.
4. New cassette recorders have been purchased and installed in the TV recording area to facilitate recording of UK radio and TV audio for the English-language monitoring effort. In addition, the Internet audio matrix in the Autodin room was updated to enable Internet staff to make parallel audio recordings of incoming and outgoing video transmissions.

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III. ADMINISTRATION

Personnel

1. The bureau chief held presentation ceremonies in his office during the month to honor staff editor [] upon her promotion to GS-12 and to present bureau engineer [] with a Certificate of Distinction and Communications Unit Deputy Chief [] with the Certificate of Merit for their outstanding contributions to the London communications upgrade.

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2. Bureau management and the Tabulations Unit honored []

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[] at a dinner at a local pub on the occasion of his retirement on 31 December. The bureau chief presented Mr. [] with the FBIS Retirement Plaque and a watch from the bureau staff.

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3. [] entered on duty as a telephone operator on 1 January. Candidates [] have been placed in processing to fill two of the three upcoming vacancies in the Communications Section.

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4. Communicators [] attended the BBC's half-day safety course for fire wardens.

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5. Administrative assistant [] returned to work full-time this month following recent successful surgery.

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6. Three candidates for PMU's vacant Russian position were interviewed and tested on 28 and 30 December. The tests are being evaluated by PMU Deputy Chief []

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IV. VISITS

1. To the bureau: Hong Kong Bureau Chief Monitor [] on 19 December while on private travel in the UK and Austria Bureau Yugoslav monitor [] on 30 December for bureau tour and briefing while on private travel.

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2. From the bureau: Bureau chief and deputy to Crowsley Park for tour and briefing conducted by GMM [] and BBC engineer []

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V. COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

1. The bureau held its annual Christmas party in the BBC Functions Room on 21 December. In deference to older members of the staff (i.e. bureau management), disco music did not start until 2230.
2. Bureau communicator [] was the runner-up in the READING CHRONICLE 1988 Badminton Championship.

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Attachments

cc: Chief, Austria Bureau
Chief, Islamabad Unit
Chief, Okinawa Bureau